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West Roxbury

District Profile & Proposed 1978-1980 Neighborhood Improvement Program

City of Boston
Kevin H. White, Mayor
Boston Redevelopment Authority
Neighborhood Planning Program
Summer, 1977

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KEVIN H WHITE
MAYOR

CITY OF BOSTON
OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
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The Boston Redevelopment Authority's Neighborhood Planning Program has prepared this report to assist residents and City agencies develop longer range solutions to community-wide planning issues.

This "Neighborhood Profile" contains information which helps bring into sharp focus those matters which are of concern to residents of each neighborhood in the City. This information facilitates public understanding and assists all of us--both at City Hall and in the neighborhood--in determining how we can best use the resources available to us.

I hope this booklet serves as an important building block to encourage greater interest in the problems confronting this neighborhood and our City and help us all in developing solutions to these problems.

Kevin H. White
Mayor

Boston Redevelopment Authority

Robert F. Walsh / Director

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The Boston Redevelopment Authority, as the City planning agency, is pleased to submit for neighborhood review a profile of West Roxbury.

It is my hope that the profile can serve as a starting point in the dialogue that should and must take place between neighborhood residents and public officials as decisions are made about the use of community development funds and other matters of public policy.

The decision-making process, of course, must be based on data that is up-to-date and accurate. I am confident that the material contained in this report can be of great assistance to all who care about this neighborhood in particular and the city as a whole.

Questions and comments about the material in the report should be directed to the Neighborhood Planning staff of the BRA.

Robert F. Walsh
Director
Boston Redevelopment Authority

This planning report, prepared by the West Roxbury Neighborhood Planner, is intended to assist local residents and City officials in defining the needs of and programs for the West Roxbury area. It is also written to provide prospective residents and investors with an analysis of current issues facing the community.

The report includes background information, a discussion of major community planning and development issues and recommended strategies and is intended to assist in the establishment of a long range framework for decision making by the public and private sectors.

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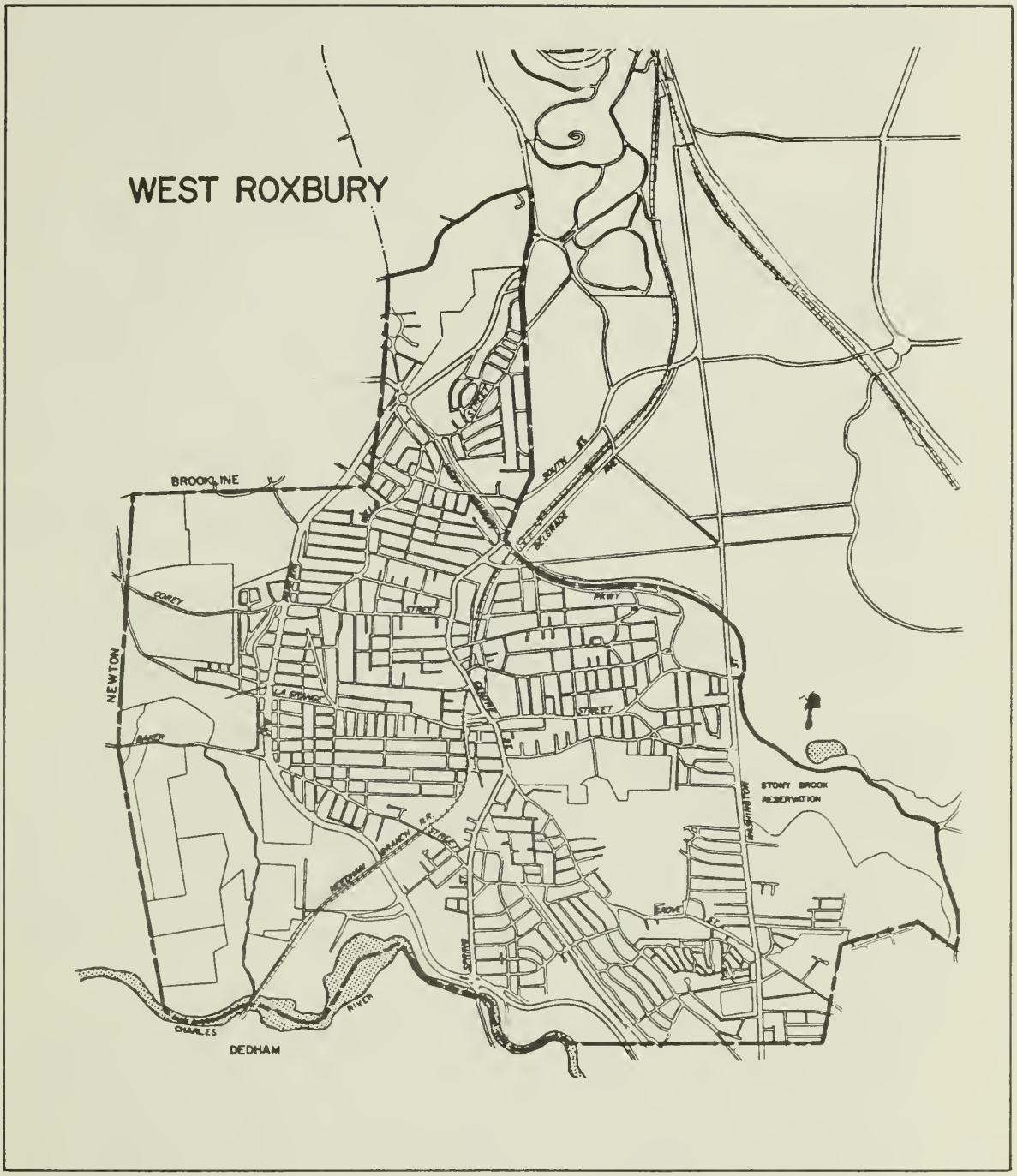

WEST ROXBURY
BROOKLINE
NEWTON
COREY
STREET
LA GRANGE
BAKER
SOUTH ST.
BELGRADE
PKWY
STREET
STONY BROOK
RESERVATION
WASHINGTON
GROVE
NEEDHAM BRANCH R.R.
STREET
CHARLES
RIVER
DEDHAM

1. BACKGROUND

A. NEIGHBORHOOD HISTORY

The area known today as West Roxbury was in its early years part of the Town of Roxbury, founded in 1630. At that time the district was wooded and rocky, with marshes along the Charles River. The flatlands were devoted primarily to farming. By the early 1800's, the rudiments of West Roxbury Village had formed along Centre Street near Spring Street.

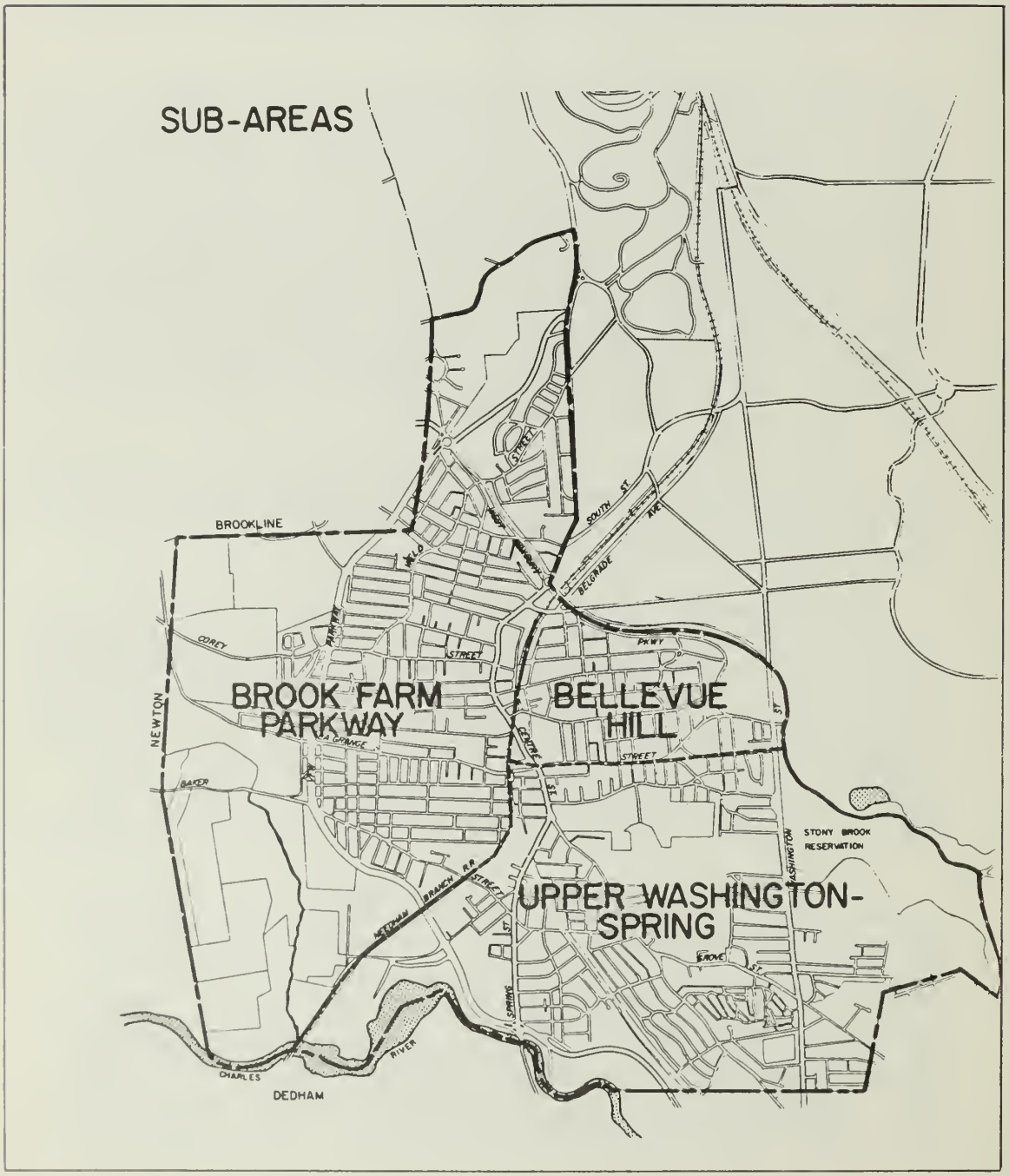
Two famous institutions were located here. Roxbury Latin School, the oldest private grammar school in America, was founded in 1645, and operating today at the same site near Centre and Spring Streets, and in 1841, one of the farms in West Roxbury became the site of a famous utopian experiment: the Brook Farm community. A group of Transcendentalists established, in the words of Nathaniel Hawthorne, "a beautiful scheme of a noble and unselfish life," where everyone was expected to take part in farm activities as well as intellectual pursuits. In 1847, the group dissolved due to financial loss when the new dormitory was destroyed by fire. In January, 1977, an extensive fire destroyed several of the key buildings. The Boston Landmarks Commission recently designated Brook Farm as an Historic Landmark.

As a result of a conflict between the rural and the more developed parts of Roxbury, West Roxbury split off from Roxbury in 1851. The rural Town of West Roxbury included areas known today as Jamaica Plain, Roslindale, and West Roxbury.

In 1851, the Dedham Branch of the railroad opened, bringing West Roxbury within easy commuting distance to Boston. Three stations served the area encompassed in the present day planning district and small-scale entrepreneurs began building homes for the commuting middle classes in the vicinity of the rail line. The first wave of construction after the Civil War formed initial patterns of development. In 1874, West Roxbury was annexed to the City of Boston. During a second wave of home building from the mid-1880's to the 1890's, streets were laid out in about half the district.

By 1920, less than one fourth of the residential units now existing had been built. A building boom in the decade of the 1920's increased the housing stock to nearly half that of the present day. The Parkway and Mt. Vernon areas were nearly three-fourths developed, and Bellevue Hill was over half-developed. Construction continued during the Depression at about half the 1920's rate and filled in much of the remaining land in these neighborhoods. The few homes built in the 1940's were constructed in the Brook Farm - Sawmill area, bringing the number of homes in this area to about three-fourths the present day number. The remaining lots

were developed for the most part during the 1950's. Nearly all post-War residential construction in the district was concentrated in the Upper Washington - Spring Streets area in the southern portion of West Roxbury. About half the units now existing there were built during the 1950's and 1960's.



B. EXISTING CHARACTERISTICS

West Roxbury is located in the southwestern section of Boston and abuts Roslindale, Hyde Park and the towns of Dedham, Newton and Brookline. It is a community of homeowners who boast of its fine housing stock of spacious single and two family homes with manicured lawns and gardens situated off tree-lined streets. It can best be described as a suburban neighborhood where community pride and confidence run strong.

This community, oriented toward family life, affords excellent recreation opportunities both active and passive, and is within easy commuting distance of downtown Boston as well as the Route 128 industrial belt. Local churches and synagogues have always played an important role in West Roxbury, as have the local schools, both public and private which are located here.

Traditionally, many of West Roxbury's children attend the two local parochial grammar schools and the Archdiocesan high schools located throughout Boston. In addition, Roxbury Latin School, a private school, is viewed as an excellent educational resource. In 1976-77, the West Roxbury High School, the City's newest community school complex, was opened and offers a broad curriculum of academic, vocational and athletic programs. Additionally, a high percentage of West Roxbury's youth attend the Latin Schools which are noted for their outstanding educational achievements. This district is serviced by the Ohrenberger Community School for elementary aged children. Adult evening programs are also conducted at the community schools.

Population in West Roxbury increased by 24% between 1960 and 1970 to 35,410. Most of this growth occurred in the newer sections, south of the Needham Branch Railroad, where one-family and apartment house construction occurred.

Housing is, for the most part, in excellent condition although some houses in the district are in need of minor repairs. Most of these houses are located on or near major streets such as Washington and Spring-Centre Streets. Only a few structures in West Roxbury need major repairs. These are located for the most part in the Washington/Grove Streets area along unimproved and private streets.

The real estate market in West Roxbury has exhibited a steady rising trend throughout the district. Interest in the neighborhood has been particularly strong in the past year as young, middle class professionals discover the quality and style of houses in West Roxbury at prices which compare favorably to those found in nearby suburban towns.

In 1970, median family income for West Roxbury was the highest in the City, with the exception of the Back Bay-Beacon Hill area. This median figure of $12,285 was $3,152 above the City's median.

The Hart Survey* indicated that 40% of the households had annual family incomes over $15,000, and 27% were employed in professional and executive capacities.

In 1970, West Roxbury had the highest percentage of persons over 65 of any district in Boston, although the lowest percentage of aged persons below the poverty level. The Hart Survey indicated that 29% of the households heads in West Roxbury were retired compared to 19% citywide.

There are a number of apartment complexes, which range in size from small 16-18 unit buildings to large multi-structure developments. These apartment buildings are generally located along Washington and Grove Streets and Spring and LaGrange Streets.

The residential character of West Roxbury and other factors such as poor access to Boston's highway system have precluded large amounts of industrial development. The two areas of industrial use are the West Roxbury Crushed Stone quarry at Grove and Centre Streets and the City's Gardner Street dump in the Sawmill area. Because of the proximity of remaining developable land to residential areas, new industrial uses are considered unlikely.

The district's primary commercial area is located along the 1 1/4 mile strip of Centre Street between the West Roxbury Parkway and Spring Street. One of the City's healthiest neighborhood shopping centers, Centre Street provides most of West Roxbury's local shopping needs and offers strong competition to outlying malls in Dedham in capturing the disposable income of local consumers.

The Grove Street commercial center is a major concern as it has been the subject of fires and extreme vandalism. One large structure was recently demolished and several others are vacant and in poor condition. The street lighting for this center is insufficient.

A large area of land along Sawmill Brook in the southwestern section of the district is wetland, serving as a flood plain for the Charles River. The wetlands have been encroached upon by the City dump and by cemeteries covering large tracts. These include Mt. Benedict, St. Joseph's, Mt. Lebanon, Gethsemane, and Holyhood cemeteries, occupying some 535 acres, of which only 50% is developed. A 179 acre vacant portion of these cemeteries owned by the Lutheran Church is expected to be purchased by the Metropolitan District Commission for passive recreation. In 1975, enabling legislation was approved for this purchase.

* Hart Research Associates, A Survey of Attitudes Toward the City of Boston and its Neighborhoods, May, 1977.

The City of Boston owns extensive land tracts within the Sawmill Area including 45 acres comprising the Southwest High School site and the near-capacity 90 acre, Gardner Street Sanitary Landfill, (operated by the Department of Public Works) as well as approximately 8 acres adjacent to the Charles River owned by the Boston Conservation Commission.

The following is a discussion of West Roxbury's sub-areas:

1. Bellevue Hill/LaGrange

Located in the eastern portion of West Roxbury, Bellevue Hill/LaGrange is bounded by the West Roxbury Parkway, Washington Street, the West Roxbury Crushed Stone Quarry and the Needham Branch Railroad. Bellevue Hill is one of the oldest established neighborhoods in West Roxbury, flanking one of the highest points in Boston, with parks located at both the top and bottom of the hill. These factors make for a particularly interesting topographical setting. The houses are also architecturally varied, including some from the Victorian era. Generally both the houses and the lots are more spacious than in other areas, rendering Bellevue Hill symbolic of a prestigous neighborhood.

In 1970, Bellevue Hill/LaGrange had a population of 6210, an increase of 6% over 1960. Because this is one of the oldest neighborhoods in West Roxbury, it experienced little growth in the last decade. The age characteristics for this area also reflect this older composition with a high proportion of elderly individuals (21%) although a recent sample of newer residents in this area* indicates that this neighborhood is experiencing an inmigration of younger newcomers with children. Median family income for this area ($13,220) exceeded the district-wide median of $12,285 and only 7% of the families earned under $5,000 annually.

Almost all houses in Bellevue Hill are owner-occupied and, according to a 1973 housing survey, of the 1780 housing units recorded in 1970, only 85 (5%) needed repairs in excess of $1,000 each. Most of these houses needing repairs are in the area closest to the Centre Street commercial district.

The Centre Street commercial area and the strip stores along Washington Street provide the major convenience goods and services to Bellevue Hill. A small shopping center which has recently shown signs of economic uncertainty with a super-market and convenience goods stores is located on the northern edge of Bellevue Hill.

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* A Look at the Future of West Roxbury, Boston Redevelopment Authority, Research Department, April, 1976 (Draft).

2. Brook Farm/Parkway

The Brook Farm/Parkway area is located to the west of the Needham Branch Railroad and is bounded on its other sides by Newton and Brookline. Brick Colonials and English Tudor styled houses are interspersed in this district of tree-lined parkways which impart a feeling of comfortable, gracious living. Generally these houses are somewhat smaller and newer than those found in Bellevue Hill. In 1970, its population was 16,600 representing an increase of only 3% over 1960.

Very little new residential construction has occurred in this area. New non-residential construction has included the Southwest High School, nursing homes along the VFW Parkway and a new addition to the VA Hospital, an intensive rehabilitation center for paralysis victims. The existing population is older and living in single family homes. The median family income ranges from $12,000 to $13,010, slightly above the district wide median, and only 7% of the total families earn below $5,000 annually.

Like Bellevue Hill, almost all of the homes in this area are owner-occupied, and based on a 1973 survey, of the 4,880 housing units recorded in this area, 55 (less than 1%) needed repairs in excess of $1,000 each.

The Westbrook Village and the Centre Street commercial areas are within the Brook Farm/Parkway area. Both commercial centers adequately serve the residents of this area. Westbrook Village consists of a small commercial center located on the V.F.W. Parkway which largely caters to the immediate apartment dwellers. Because of its mixture of quality retail and service uses and the availability of parking, it is also successful in drawing from the surrounding West Roxbury shopping community.

A potential problem in this area is the proliferation of commercial services directed at high school students at the new Southwest High. The community is opposed to "fast food" operations locating along the VFW Parkway.

3. Upper Washington/Spring Streets

The Upper Washington/Spring Streets area is located in the southern portion of West Roxbury and is bounded by the Needham Branch Railroad, Newton, Dedham and Hyde Park. It is generally the most suburban of all of Boston's neighborhoods and contains most of the district's newest housing stock, much of which was built between 1950 and 1968. More

modern, compact capes and colonials predominate in tract-like development patterns. This area of West Roxbury has more and younger couples in its established population than other sections principally because many homes were purchased only 10 years ago when families were in their early child rearing stages.

This area, however, also contains a growing number of elderly apartment dwellers due to the recent construction of two elderly housing complexes. Rockingham Glen (141 units), a private MHFA development and Rockland Street Elderly (72 units), a Boston Housing Authority Turnkey development. In addition, there are a substantial number of elderly couples and widows living in the several conventional apartment complexes also located along Washington Street.

In 1970, its population was 12,600, an increase of 30% over 1960. Most of this growth was due to apartment construction in the Washington-Grove Streets neighborhood and to scattered single family homes along Centre Street.

Based on a 1972 housing survey, of the 4,235 housing units in this neighborhood, 105 (2%) needed repairs in excess of $1,000 each. Because of the high number of apartments, one and two family homes account for only 61% of the total units, although 94% of the structures were owner occupied. There is very little housing deterioration in this sub-area, although limited pockets are found in the Washington-Grove Streets neighborhood.

The commercial area at Washington/Grove Streets has steadily deteriorated. Consequently, much of the consumer purchasing power in this area is now lost to Dedham's shopping centers. Fires and vandalism have extensively damaged this commercial sector and have resulted in the demolition of a large structure with vacancies in several others. The introduction of regularly assigned footpatrols to this area has helped to curb vandalism and juvenile crime but sodium vapor lighting is very much needed to futher reduce these problems. This commercial node desperately needs to be upgraded to improve both the quality of its stores and its overall physical appearance.

The Ohrenberger Community School is located in this district and offers a number of programs and activities to the non-school population. Its facilities are regularly used and enjoyed by Hyde Park and West Roxbury's adult population, particularly the elderly who meet here.

The West Roxbury Quarry is located in this residential area and is currently owned and operated by the West Roxbury Crushed Stone Company, a subsidiary of Browning-Ferris Industries, Inc., a national corporation specializing in solid waste disposal. The Quarry abuts the Roxbury Latin property and contains several hundred acres of land, much of which is in its natural wooded state. The future of this property is a serious concern to West Roxbury and the City of Boston.

Comparative Statistics - West Roxbury

1970 U.S. Census Data

Population	Bellevue Hill/ LaGrange	Brook Farm/ Parkway	Upper Washington/ Spring	WEST ROXBURY DISTRICT	CITY
Total 1970	6,210	16,600	12,600	35,410	639,803
Change from '60	+6%	+3%	+30%	+24%	-8%
Aged 15-19 yrs. 1970	579	1,059	890	2,761	60,900
Change from '60	+21%	+16%	+42%	+26%	+17%
Aged 20-24 yrs. 1970	449	789	1,064	2,496	76,958
Change from '60	+38%	+19%	+67%	+41%	+41%
Aged 65 yrs. & over 1970	986	2,553	1,656	5,616	81,437
Change from '60	+14%	+25%	+58%	+32%	-5%
Income					
Median Family	$13,220	$12,000-13,010	$11,440-	$12,285	$ 9,133
% Families under $5,000	7%	7%	8%	8%	22%
Housing					
Total Dwelling Units	1,760	4,880	4,235	10,895	232,401
Units Needing Repairs in excess of $1,000	85	55	105	245	67,102
% Owner Occupied Units	96%	92%	94%	94%	27%
Mobility of Residents People in same house over 5 years-1970	70%	70%	55%	64%	50%

C. PAST MAJOR PUBLIC INVESTMENT (1968-1976)

Since 1970 the major thrust of the City's Capital Improvement Program has been in strengthening neighborhoods through the construction or renovation of community facilities and parks, reconstruction of streets, replacement of sewer and water lines and construction of off street parking lots. The City spent $1.1 million for the construction of the Cannon Elementary School and $7.4 million for the completion of the Ohrenberger School. Three playgrounds had additions: at the Draper Playground and Pool a new tennis and basketball court was constructed for $744,000, the Hynes Playground Pavilion was constructed for $51,400, and the Baker St. Little League diamond was completed at a cost of $50,000. In 1972, the Police Substation was placed in a renovated gasoline service station at a cost of $86,883. In 1974, an addition to the Washington Street Fire Station (Engine Company 55) was completed at a cost of $385,000. In September, 1977, the West Roxbury High School, the City's newest community school, was opened.

Three smaller scale capital expenditures by the Parks and Recreation Department include floodlights in Billings Field ($37,000), Draper Field ($58,000), and Hynes Field ($23,200). In addition to floodlights, Billings and Draper fields received other site improvements.

At the same time there were over 125 streets reconstructed or resurfaced, 27 sidewalks reconstructed and 11 streets that underwent sewer and water line improvements. In addition to new street lighting along West Boundary Road to serve the new Ohrenberger School, the Centre Street Business lighting program with sodium vapor bulbs was completed in 1974 between West Roxbury Parkway and Spring Street at a cost of $150,000.

As part of the City's commerical area improvement program, the Pope Lumber site was acquired in 1975 and a 120 space off-street parking lot was completed at Corey and Railroad Streets to serve the Centre Street commerical area. In addition approximately $175,000 was allocated for a foot patrolman along Centre St. and $115,000 for design of a reconstructed Centre Street.

Public effort in housing has been directed to three areas of activity: new development, leased housing, and rehabilitation. In August, 1977, the 119-unit elderly BHA development was completed on Spring Street. The Boston Housing Authority also owns and operates a 72 unit, elderly housing project along Rockland Street which was built in 1970. In 1974, the Massachusetts Housing and Finance Agency financed the development of Rockingham Glen

Housing Development for the elderly. This 141 unit development at Rockingham and Washington Streets was occupied in 1974 with 25% of the units leased to the Boston Housing Authority for low income, elderly individuals and families. Since September 1975, the Housing Improvement Program (HIP) has encouraged the private rehabilitation of over 1,500 buildings in the district. This program has been instrumental in the preservation of the housing stock by offering tax rebates to homeowners who complete home improvements to meet minimum code requirements. In 1976-1977, the average rebate to West Roxbury homowners who participated in the City's HIP program was $480.

D. 1977 PUBLIC INVESTMENT PROGRAM

The 1977 public investment program concentrated on four areas: housing, commercial area revitalization, neighborhood services and traffic improvements.

1. Housing

The Housing Improvement Program (HIP) which provides incentives for rehabilitation of 1-6 unit owner-occupied structures has been available throughout West Roxbury and has funds for approximately 400 buildings ($225,000). There have been approximately 1,500 applicants since the program began in 1975. A site office in Roslindale Square is currently open to serve residents of West Roxbury. The 50% rebate program for elderly homeowners was made available in West Roxbury. The year's funds were expended within three months of the program inception.

2. Commercial Area Revitalization

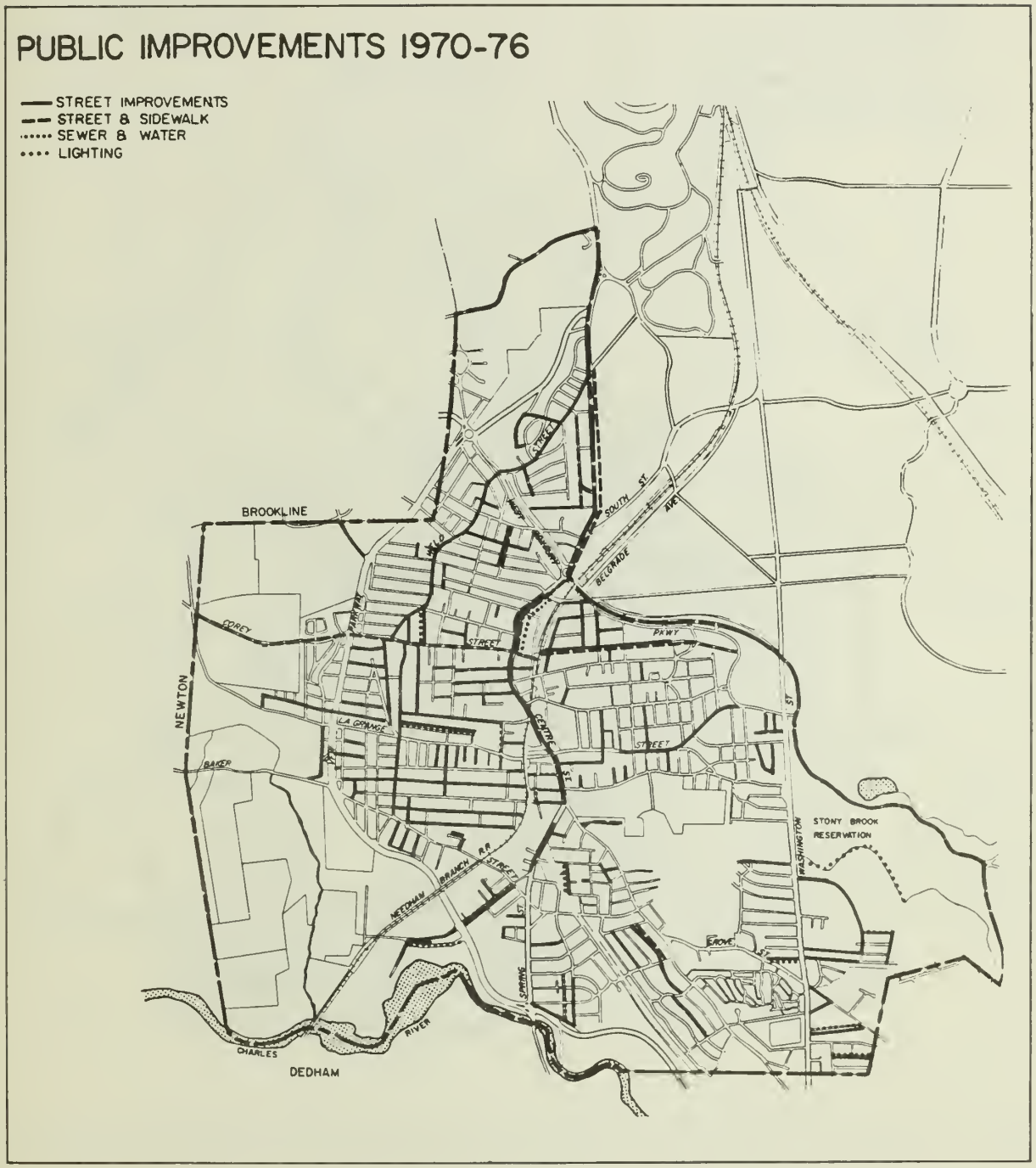
The City's efforts toward commercial area revitalization has included appropriation of $87,200 to continue the foot patrolman program, $5,000 for public signing and amenities, and $30,000 for 20% rebates to storeowners who improve their storefronts. $19,600 was reserved for rehabilitation to the Boys' Club and $30,000 for the YMCA. Local Public Works funding was approved for the reconstruction of Centre Street between the West Roxbury Parkway and Spring Street ($850,000).

3. Neighborhood Services

The City allocated $16,500 for providing an elderly van to West Roxbury's senior citizens from the Ohrenberger School. $5,000 was allocated for the installation of a walkway and picnic area on land leading to the Ohrenberger School from Cedarcrest Road. Recreational site improvements to Billings Field ($40,000) to refurbish existing tennis courts and construct additional courts; and reconstruction of the tot lot at Billings Field ($50,000).

4. Traffic Improvements

Installation of traffic signals at the intersection of Church and Weld Streets and at Rockland and Washington Streets.



PUBLIC FACILITIES 1968-76

1. CANNON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
2. OHRENBERGER ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
3. DRAPER POOL & PLGD.
4. HYNES PLGD. PAVILLION
5. BILLINGS FIELD
6. POLICE SUB-STATION
7. FIRE STATION NO. 55 ADDITION
8. OFF STREET PARKING LOT
9. LITTLE LEAGUE DIAMOND
10. WEST ROXBURY HIGH
11. SPRING STREET ELDERLY

1977 INVESTMENT PROGRAM

HOUSING IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM
▬ CENTER STREET RECONSTRUCTION
1- HYNES FIELD
2- BILLINGS FIELD
3- FOOT PATROL PROGRAM
4- NEIGHBORHOOD BUSINESS PROGRAM
5- ELDERLY VAN
6- BOY'S CUB
7- YMCA REHABILITATION

2. PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT ISSUES/RECOMMENDED STRATEGIES (Mid and Long-Range)

A. COMMERCIAL AREA STRENGTHENING

Issue

The Centre Street commercial area has continued to be one of the most viable neighborhood commercial areas in the City. It has a strong mix of convenience stores as well as branches of the City's major banks. Within the past year, private investment in this commercial center has been considerable. Storefront improvements, business relocation and the opening of new shops indicate confidence in the capacity of West Roxbury's residents to support commercial uses. Nevertheless, the outlying shopping centers such as Dedham Mall and Route 1 establishments where parking is more convenient and access is easier are attracting many of Centre Street's potential customers.

Traffic congestion, selected unimproved storefronts, along with storefront vandalism and crime detract from the successful indicators of vitality. The reconstruction of Centre Street will better facilitate the flow of traffic and improve visual street/sidewalk appearance. The recent construction of a 120-car off-street parking lot at Corey and Railroad Streets has alleviated the pressing demand for parking but the need for additional parking remains. The Washington/Grove commercial area has continued to deteriorate despite the introduction of a large amount of new multi-family construction in the area. The area's ability to support commercial activity, the structural soundness of the remaining structures and reuse options at this node need to be examined closely. This incidence of deterioration needs to be halted before it causes residential confidence to erode in the surrounding neighborhood.

Westbrook Village Shopping Center has maintained its successful reputation despite competition from nearby malls because of its quality stores, accessibility and parking availability. Vacancies are non-existent. This shopping center is comprised of small retail shops located in an aging physical plant, however, and costly renovations will likely be necessary in the near future. Efforts to assist modernization to assure continued economic strength should be available at this location.

In the past few years Star Market and Osco Drug along Spring Street, just south of Temple Street, were the only major new stores to open in West Roxbury These stores have been successful because they provide convenient off-street parking and attract customers from all over West Roxbury. They also offer goods and services at competitive prices.

Billboards are a major negative factor in West Roxbury's commercial areas, especially along Centre Street where many billboards are standing on store roofs. These signs confuse the shoppers looking for directions and detract from the appearance of the area.

Strategy

The City's commercial area revitalization program should include five major approaches:

1. Continuation of the storefront improvement program to provide for a cash rebate to storeowners who renovate their storefronts. In 1977, $30,000 was allocated for such rebates in this area. To make this program more successful, Centre Street merchants should initiate advertising campaigns, improve their store identification signs and upgrade those stores which need to be modernized on a block basis to assure design consistency.

2. Reconstruction of Centre Street from West Roxbury Parkway to Spring Street to include neckdowns, permanent bus stops, brick edging on sidewalks, street trees and benches where appropriate. The contract was put out to bid in Ocotber, 1977, and construction will begin in March, 1978.

3. Award of Hasting Street lot to private enterpise to construct and manage a 14-car parking lot and to provide a small landscaped sitting area for shoppers. A private managment system for the operation of the Pope Lumber parking lot should be instituted by the City in cooperation with the West Roxbury Business and Professional Association.

4. The Centre Street footpatrolman program should be continued during the next three years. Based on reports during the years it has been in operation, there has been a reduction in storefront breaks, vandalism and juvenile crime due to this program.

5. Billboards in local commercial areas should be eliminated. Appeal by the City to the State Outdoor Advertising Board to reject annual billboard applications in these critical areas is in progress.

B. NEGATIVE IMPACT OF GARDNER STREET DUMP

Issue

For a number of years the City has been discussing the closing of the Gardner Street dump, the only sanitary landfill area for the City. While the existing 90 acre dump has potential expansion

areas which could extend its life, the West Roxbury community is generally opposed to this alternative. Over the years, there has been a negative impact from truck traffic along the district's commercial and residential streets. Recently, this negative impact has been viewed as much more serious with recent opening of the nearby West Roxbury High School and the nearby acquisition and development of the 179 acre St. Joseph's and Lutheran cemetery tracts by the Metropolitan District Commission for a passive recreation preserve. Fuller utilization of the Charles River frontage for recreation purposes is also precluded by the dump's operations.

Strategy

The City of Boston continued its phaseout program of the Gardner Street landfill by reducing annual tonnage to 80,000,± as of July 1, 1977. A tentative 1980 date has been established by the Public Works Commission for its termination. In the interim, plans are being developed for the construction of a new solid waste facility. At the present time, only refuse for the southwestern portion of Boston is being trucked to West Roxbury.

A citywide task force should be activated to complete the plans necessary for this phaseout and finalization of plans for the incinerator plant in the South Bay area be completed.

A planning and design study should be completed on reuse possiblities for the Gardner Street dump. A planting program should begin prior to the final closing of the landfill, to be followed by extensive planting.

C. PLANS FOR THE WEST ROXBURY CRUSHED STONE QUARRY SITE

Issue

This is an 80-acre tract of vacant land in the central-southern portion of the district. The majority of the site is owned by the West Roxbury Crushed Stone Company and Roxbury Latin School although most of the site is used for an active sand and gravel operation. Additionally, there are large amounts of land near the site which have been sub-divided, but remain vacant. While the industrial operation has been in existence for the last 40 years, land values in the area have increased and some recent construction of multi-family buildings have occurred nearby on Washington and Grove Streets. There is serious concern in the local community that if the quarry uses are eliminated, the area may be used as a solid waste disposal site after the phase-out of the Gardner Street Dump. In fact, recent comments by the Quarry's new owners, Browning-Ferris Industries, Inc. show their desire to utilize the quarry for a landfill operation if the City dump is discontinued. There is also opposition to intensive development of the site for multi-family construction.

Strategy

There is a need to complete a plan and to set reuse guidelines for the West Roxbury Crushed Stone Quarry site. The on-going quarry operation must be considered a liability to any adjacent development mainly due to the noise emanating from the quarry operation and its physical characteristics (175 ft. cliffs, a large open pit, and water filled areas).

A preliminary evaluation by the BRA indicates there is a possibility for new street extensions between Centre and Washington Streets which would allow for new construction of single family homes on some of the mapped, but as yet unbuilt streets adjacent to the Quarry. This would both limit the Quarry's expansion and improve any argument against a change of use from a quarry to a sanitary landfill operation.

The City should oppose any use of the Quarry for an interim solid waste transfer station or landfill operation as this would add truck traffic onto residential streets in the area as well as create an undesirable land use.

D. RESIDENTIAL AREA IMPROVEMENTS

Issue

While the majority of homes in West Roxbury are well maintained, their general age, size and style require constant upkeep which is often costly, especially for the elderly homeowner on a fixed monthly income. In addition, homes located in the Washington/ Grove Streets area are in need of repair assistance as well as those located along the heavily traveled arteries of Belgrade Avenue, Spring and Washington Streets.

There is concern that because of the growing number of elderly homeowners and the expenses associated with energy and utility costs for older, large single family houses that illegal conversion, especially in stable areas such as Bellevue Hill and the Parkway, may be on the increase.

Because of the proliferation of non-residential uses (i.e., nursing homes) in the V.F.W. Parkway area, there is also concern that the negative effect of these uses could spill over into nearby residential areas.

A recent study by the Research Department of the BRA indicates that West Roxbury's housing market has been active during the past few years with rising values. Approximately one-third of the new homeowners studied were between the ages of 25-34, many of these families with children. Real estate brokers report a definite increase in buyers' interest in West Roxbury which is reflected in increased property values. The need for upgraded streets and

sidewalks along with regularly maintained recreational facilities condtinues to be a priority if West Roxbury is to retain its attractive real estate investment climate.

Strategy

Continuation of the HIP program in West Roxbury is planned in 1977, with a site office already open in Roslindale Square serving both Roslindale and West Roxbury. Over 400 units are expected to be repaired during the coming year under this program. The areas which should be emphasized include Washington/ Grove Streets, Spring Street and Baker Street and Centre/ Manthorne Road areas.

To prolong self-sufficiency and independence of elderly homeowners, it is strongly recommended that the 50% Housing Improvement Program be widely marketed in West Roxbury. In addition, the construction of new elderly housing units should be encouraged as elderly are a growing portion of the district's population.

In critical residential areas, future development should be limited or restricted. For example, in the VFW area, a master plan is needed to make recommendations on the reuse of vacant land areas still in existence between Baker and Gardner Streets along the VFW Parkway. Capital investments should be used to strengthen existing residential areas. Zoning violations should be carefully monitored so that illegal conversions of older, single family houses to multi-family dwellings are checked.

E. PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENTS- NEEDHAM BRANCH MBTA EXTENSION

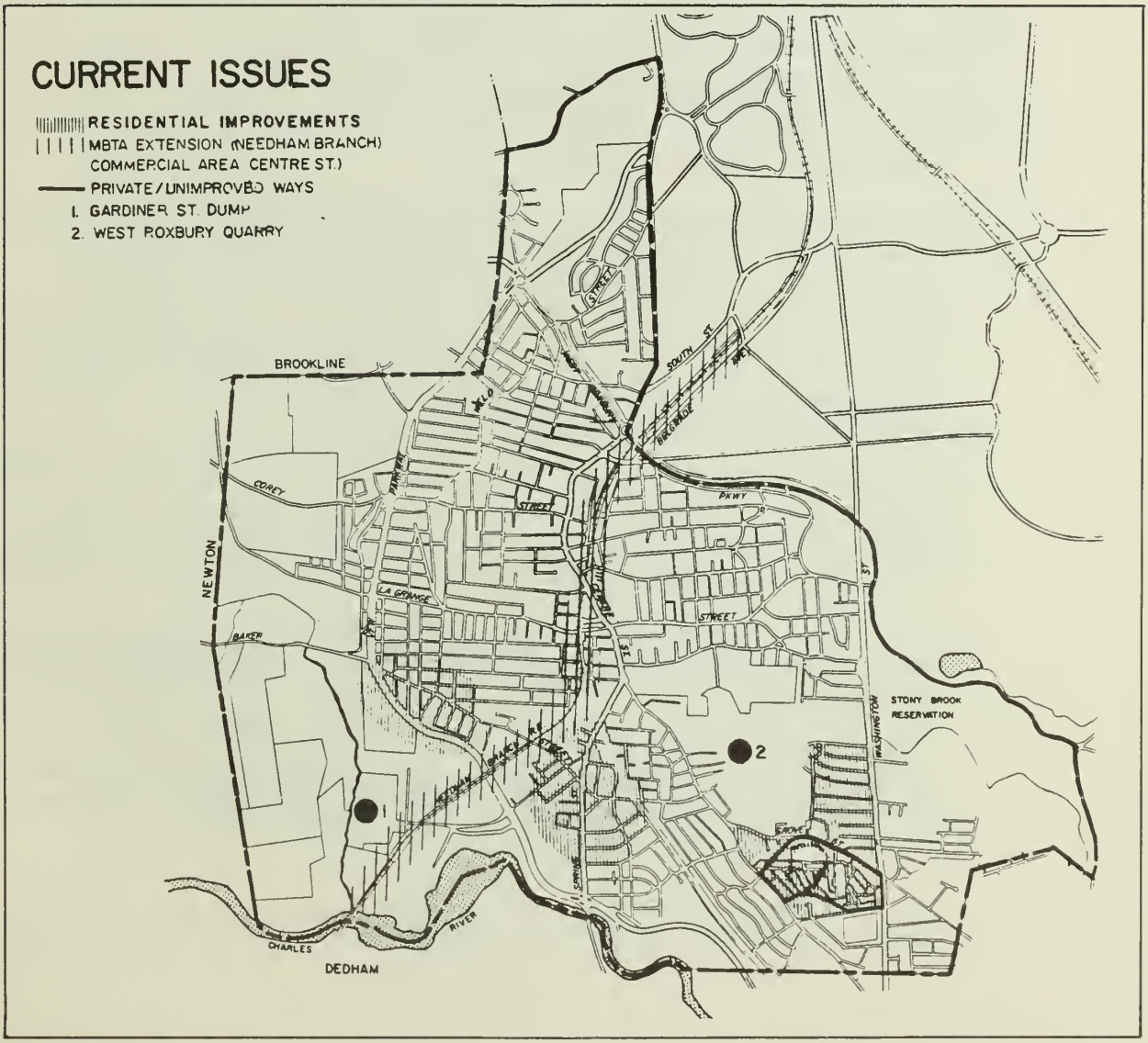
Issue

The district is located on the end of the City's mass transit program, with connections to the Forest Hills Orange Line MBTA by bus service only. The proposed extension of the Orange Line along the Needham Branch Railroad from Forest Hills has generally been accepted by most residents in West Roxbury although there has been discussion over the type of service (i.e., rapid transit v.s. commuter rail) and the location of stations within West Roxbury. A major issue with Boston residents is the type of service to be introduced (rapid transit or upgraded commuter rail). Needham residents are overwhelmingly in favor of an upgraded commuter rail service while Boston residents are generally in favor of a rapid transit extension.

Strategy

The City, the BRA and the Southwest Corridor Development Coordinator are working closely with local groups as well as with the MBTA consultants on the final determination of the type of service and station location areas for the proposed extension line. Improved rail access to the downtown can be an asset to the neighborhood and improve opportunities for retail, office and residential development near stations. A consultant is currently under contract to the MBTA to produce an Environmental Impact Analysis (EIA) which studies both rapid transit and commuter rail alternatives on the Needham branch. This report will be available this year.

The timetable for construction of the Needham Branch Extension Line requires at least one year in engineering-technical design after the completion and acceptance of the EIA report by the State and Federal governments. A five year construction period is estimated.



3. PROPOSED THREE YEAR IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM (1978-1980) AND LONGER-RANGE PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVES

The needs of West Roxbury which should be addressed during the next three years (1978-1980) include: (1) Increased housing assistance and new elderly housing; (2) Strengthening Centre Street commercial area; (3) Reuse of Gardner Street dump; (4) Options for the West Roxbury Crushed Stone Quarry area; (5) Joint development proposals at MBTA Stations on proposed Needham Branch MBTA Extension; and (6) New public works: streets, sidewalks and lighting.

In preparing recommendations for this proposed program, recent funding levels are assumed. However, city-wide efforts must be made to improve funding levels through increased federal, state and local aid. The city faces tremendous burdens based on the uncertainty of the municipal bond market, the inequitable tax structure in Massachusetts, and cut-backs at the state and federal level.

Because of the scarcity of available funds, the city must continue to utilize a variety of resources to coordinate neighborhood preservation efforts and to maximize private investment.

PROPOSED IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

A. Increased Housing Assistance

It is essential to continue to provide programs which encourage preservation and upgrading of the housing stock. Both owner-occupants and investor-owners, given financial incentives and technical counselling, are anxious to make the improvements required to meet housing code standards. The HIP Program should be continued and targeted in areas such as Washington Street, Spring Street and Baker Street. The 50% HIP Elderly Program should be actively promoted in West Roxbury.

New elderly housing should be considered on a portion of the Pope Lumber site, off Centre Street. This is an excellent elderly housing location since it is adjacent to both commericial activities and a proposed MBTA stop on the Needham Branch Extension Line.

The 1975 and 1976 HIP allocations of $300,000 and $175,000, respectively, were insufficient to meet the needs of West Roxbury and the $225,000 allocation for 1977 was quickly expended as it included the 50% elderly rebate. The average rebate under this program ranges between $900 and $100; with almost 30% of the households in West Roxbury headed by retired persons, the allocation will have to be increased to at least $400,000 per year for the next three years to meet expected demand in West Roxbury.

B. Strengthening Centre Street Commercial Area

The appearance of neighborhood shopping areas affects the values of the surrounding residential property and the confidence of abutting homeowners. A central issue, therefore, is how to upgrade the Centre Street commercial area in the face of competition from outlying centers.

There are a number of activities which should be completed:

1) Leadership in the business community should continue to interest storeowners to participate in the City's storefront rehabilitation program RESTORE. There are good examples of private rehabilitation already completed along Centre St., i.e., Lowrys, Hanlons, House of Leslie, etc.

2) The reconstruction of Centre Street between West Roxbury Parkway and Spring Street should be completed by Summer, 1978.

3) Vacant tracts of land within the Pope Lumber site (not needed for MBTA Station development) should be considered for elderly housing development. Acquisition of these sites by the City will insure that future housing designs accommodate MBTA plans.

4) Undertake a cost analysis for the extension of the West Roxbury Library; and secure design and construction funding for the project.

C. Reuse of the Gardner Street Dump

The Gardner Street dump has reduced its operations within the past 6 months. The opening of the Southwest High School adjacent to the dump has strengthened the desire of the community to completely close the present dump.

A major capital item will be the construction of a new incinerator in the South Bay area to replace the Gardner Street Dump. However, even if action is taken soon to begin detailed design plans, completion is estimated no earlier than 1980. It is, therefore, recommended that the City appropriate necessary funds to:

1) Design the proposed incinerator in South Bay and

2) Haul garbage and refuse to a satellite dump site outside the City during the interim period until the incinerater is in operation.

In addition, during the interim period, the City should allow only refuse from the City to be brought to the Gardner Street dump.

Finally, the possibilities of reusing the Gardner Street dump should be studied. It was not too long ago that the Columbia Point University of Massachusetts campus was a landfill operation. Development of this magnitude is not appropriate to West Roxbury, but the site could be developed for a combination of buildings and open space preservation. Provisions for a detailed engineering analysis of re-use possibilities should be provided through use of community development program funds.

D. Options for West Roxbury Crushed Stone Quarry Area

There is little question that a plan needs to be developed to reflect the practical choices open to the City and community on utilizing the site, if and when the quarry operation ceases its operations. At the present time, the West Roxbury Crushed Stone Quarry is operating in an area surrounded by mostly one and two family residences. Without some form of in-filling of the excavated quarry, there will remain the present dangers at an excavated portion 175' deep by over 4-8 acres in land area. In some cases, quarries can be in-filled with water with residences locating along the fringes Usually this is a result of springs to feed and replenish the pond or lake. There is, of course, the use of sanitary landfill over a period of time to in-fill a quarry area. This has been proposed by Browning-Ferris, current owners of the quarry and opposed by local residents because of the accompaning truck traffic, noise and public health problems generally associated with a sanitary landfill operation. This has unanimously felt to be unacceptable to the West Roxbury Community.

E. Joint Proposals at MBTA Stations on the Proposed Needham Branch MBTA Extension

It is anticipated that the proposed MBTA Needham Branch Extension line through West Roxbury will require a number of new or relocated stops. At the present time, stops are contemplated at West Roxbury Parkway, Temple Spring Street and the Pope Lumber site. The Parkway and Pope Lumber stops are in areas with large vacant or underutilized tracts of land. Stations will increase access to the downtown and provide new opportunities for tax producing development and jobs.

More specifically, the West Roxbury Parkway area contains the Gardner Street Dump and VFW Drive-In. Both of these uses will likely be phased out. The Pope Lumber site is mostly vacant, although a portion has been taken by the City for an off-street parking lot. The MBTA stations in these two locales should be developed as part of a reuse study of the surrounding areas.

F. New Public Works: Streets, Sidewalks, Sewer and Water, and Lighting

Because of limited funds and a reduced bonding capacity, the City may be unable to introduce public works of the magnitude needed into West Roxbury during the next three years. During this time, however, a systematic review should be undertaken of the needs in terms of water and sewer lines, new streets, sidewalks, street lighting, etc., to better schedule these improvements in future years.

There are a number of additional projects which should be considered including a program to upgrade private streets to public ways in the Grove area. A preliminary evaluation by the Public Facilities Department indicates this effort and could cost over $1 million.

In the next three years, various funding options should be outlined and discussed by local residents and the City.

BOSTON REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

Robert L. Farrell, Chairman
Joseph J. Walsh, Vice Chairman
James G. Colbert, Treasurer
James K. Flaherty, Assistant Treasurer
James E. Cofield, Jr., Member
Kane Simonian, Secretary
Robert F. Walsh, Director

Roy Bishop, Director, Neighborhood Planning Program
Carole Mathieson, West Roxbury, Planner

4. FUTURE INVESTMENT NEEDS as related to issues, strategies and 1977 Investment Program

ISSUE	STRATEGY	1977 INVESTMENT PROGRAM	PROPOSED 1978-1980 NEIGHBORHOOD IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM ACTIVITIES
Commercial Area Decline	Storefront Improvement Program	$30,000 allocated for Centre Street stores	Focus Restore on western side of Centre Street. Include Westbrook Village area-between Hastings and Corey Street.
	Off-street parking program		Expedite transfer of ownership of Hastings Street lot for parking.
	Street, sidewalk & lighting program	Centre Street reconstruction-($850,000)	Provide amenities along Centre Street.
			Examine feasibility of library extension at Mt. Vernon Street.
Options for West Roxbury Crushed Stone Quarry Site	Develop reuse guidelines		Pave "paper" and private streets on fringe of quarry to attract new residential development.
	Oppose use of quarry for solid waste transfer station.		
Residential Area Improvements	Use of HIP	HIP - $175,000 (400 buildings)	HIP - minimum 400 units per year
	Limit and restrict development in critical residential areas.		
	Provide for the needs of the elderly	Elderly van to West Roxbury's Senior Citizens - $16,000	Provide an additional 100 units of low/moderate income elderly housing on Pope Lumber site or other appropriate site.
	Capital Expenditures to strengthen neighborhoods (e.g. parks, schools)		
Public Transportation Improvements-Needham Branch MBTA Line	Insure that service and station location are as are appropriate to West Roxbury's needs.		Establish guidelines for joint development of station locations.
Upgrading private ways to public streets	Repave private ways		Establish a 5-year program for reconstructing private ways and acceptances as public streets.
Negative Impact of Gardner Street Dump	Establish Phase-out program; finalize plans for South Bay Area incinerator		Complete plans necessary for dump's phase-out; appropriate sufficient funds for incinerator; initiate planning study of dump's re-use potential; initiate tree planting program in dump after phase-out to restore it to original character.